

Anthony
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Life is a struggle, but incarcerated life is a more difficult struggle. It is a struggle that tests a person physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I have seen many people in my 5, 5+ years in the Cook County Jail so fair and the various tests have broken many. This world is so different from the outside and people have no idea what we experience unless they have been through it or know someone who has. Is it always bad? No, it is not, however it is definitely designed to make the strong and break the weak.

I personally have had my fair share of ups and downs in here. I have been attacked, harassed, stolen from, insulted, sexually abused, bullied, neglected, depressed, lonely etc. I have also had experiences of peace, joy, friendship, love, safety, wisdom, compassion, etc. I am fairly blessed because I could have it a lot worse and I am by no means complaining. I have met people from all walks of life and got to meet some good people. I even found a relationship with God in here, which I would not have done on the outside due to the self destructive way I was living my life.

Jail was definitely a good place for me to do self-reflection. In that reflection, I got to realize all kinds of negative aspects about myself and make the decision to be a better man. In that struggle, I have noticed that the jail does not offer enough services, programs, and resources to us. I understand that jail is meant to be temporary, but Cook County's court system is slow so quite often there are people sitting in here for years without a bond with nothing to do because they do not qualify for the few services, programs, and resources available for various reasons. →

We who have the desire to change and the motivation should be given the opportunity to do so and not be banned from those opportunities due to arbitrary obstacles.

I have seen many people in here suffering from mental illness and addiction without getting proper help. I am a recovering addict myself with mental health issues and it has been tough managing my issues without proper treatment. Medical treatment is very complicated to navigate in here, which I understand why, though it can get frustrating. I do my best to take care of my health on my own and address my medical issues if I have any, that is how I get by. I also try to help those who have medical concerns since I have a decent understanding of medical terminology.

Rehabilitation truly begins from within. People have to want to do better and be better, in order to appreciate and participate in the programs/services/privileges offered to them, which is the key to rehabilitation in the first place. If there are people in here that want to change and do right, why not offer methods for them to do so? I understand that jail is punishment and it definitely serves that purpose, but it could be repurposed to cause growth and change rather than remaining a den of iniquity and woe. A lot of lost souls are in here staying lost because they do not even know any better, but if they had opportunities to learn in here without the distractions of the outside, their eyes could open and they could find themselves and become somebody before they even get their cases resolved. If the opportunities offered helped them get credit for their cases, many detainees would have incentive to participate and do well. I would if I could, but I cannot qualify.

I acknowledge that things can be better or worse so I

have no complaints. I just have a strong passion to see change happen within the entire criminal justice system as a whole. In order for the necessary changes to happen, the people need to change because the issues plaguing the criminal justice system are a reflection of the people within this country and that is a deep reality. The system is screwed up because the people are screwed up and we cannot continue to allow it to go on because our country's values are tainted from the values of its inception. We all need to become in tune with ourselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually so we can check our values, morals, mentalities, behaviors, actions, thoughts, and words because we are destroying each other.

The destruction of humanity is not what the founding fathers wanted for this country and it is absolutely not what a loving Creator wants His creation to do to each other. We can all do better, every single one of us so please stop the violence, stop the hatred, stop the racism, stop the fear, stop the division, stop the bigotry. God created all of us equally, we are supposed to be one nation under God, indivisible" but look at us, we are all at war with each other. Where is the unity? where is the love? Where is the obedience to God? God's Greatest Commandments are to Love Him and Love our neighbors as we love ourselves, so why are people not doing that? We the people need to come together to save our country from its own destruction, let God speak to any and all who come to Him and seek His help in making a difference.